2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

V. HUSBAND AND WIFE IN THEIR OWN HOME

a. Setting up a household.

When husband and wife have been separated from his parents, they set up a household for themselves. They ask the village headman to get a house-site. They give him beer and food. The husband cuts trees and brings them from the forest; he cuts thatching grass in the forest, or buys it from somewhere. He fixes nine posts in the ground; thereupon he puts up three roof-beams; at three places he fixes double cross-beams, he fixes forty rafters, and in three places, at the top, in the middle, and at the bottom of these, he puts cross-laths. Thereupon he makes the rafter-framework and after this thatches. Then he makes a wattle and daub wall; having done this he puts up something to keep separate the place for the ancestors. The wife then kneads earth and smears this on; afterwards she fills the house inside with earth and plasters all smooth, and she makes a fire-place. The husband makes a door, of wood or of thin bamboo-slips. In the house they have two bedsteads, a wooden mortar and pestle, a winnowing-fan, baskets, brooms, earthenware vessels, big and small, ladles made of wood or of pumpkin-shell, kodali axe, chisel, adze, sickle, knife, plough-beam, yoke, plough and plough-share, flute, bow and arrows, battle-axe, sword and dancing-drum and kettle-drum. Poor people have no battle-axe, sword, dancing-drum, or kettle-drum.

342 592 35 592 [41] [534]

The sacred closet is for the ancestors to stay hidden in. Women belonging to other men are not permitted to go in there; and some people do not permit even their own daughters to go in there, that is, when they have been married. In this closet they make a small enclosure, and this is the real place for the ancestors to stay hidden in. In the closet money is also kept. On the backside of the house they have the homestead field; here they cultivate maize. And in front of the house towards the village street they have the court-yard. This they fence securely in on the four sides. They make two openings for going out and in, one is the homestead field door and one the village street door.

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The man builds a shed for the cows and bullocks and buffaloes, a fold for the goats and sheep and a sty for the pigs. The fowls and the cat stay in the house, and the dog stays somewhere on the verandah, to guard the house.

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[1] Oslo Etn. Mus. – Bodding.

Bi Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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342 it was told, to the depredations of evil-spirits. And
556 even brick-built houses like those of the rich land-
177 owners of Orissa caught our attention at Tikari-
para, Mayurbhanj, with surrounding walls of brick that one cannot usually associate with Santal life,[1] except in their absence of windows.

342 Windows Santals will never have. "O, the
776 Boṅgas," will again be the answer if you question them on the point. The Santal dog, who snarls at
[231] the chance passer-by, and is treated and fed like a member of the family, keeps an all-night vigil. If
[574] you call for a Santal at mid-night, it may be he may greet you with an arrow, for he thinks that "Boṅgas" take human shapes and lure away men and women.

353 Santal walls are the beauty-spots of the hamlet. Here the inner artistic craving of the primitive tribe has displayed itself in a realm of phantasy. In some places, we saw the walls painted with a variety of colours, white, yellow, black, red and chocolate; sometimes with one colour and sometimes with alternate stripes, again with queer patches of triangles and rectangles. (See illustrations). Various pictures, associated with Santal life, sometimes greet your eyes. Here is a Brobdingnagian deity aiming a shaft at a

1 This was the house of Chandramohan Murmu of Tikaripara, Bamanghati, Mayurbhanj. Its dimensions were measured to be 50 by 20 cubits.

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

bunch of "sal" flowers, there a village-group sitting at a feast of rice and rice-beer. We were also invited to examine some more wall-paintings, walls which were proud to bear representations of steam-engines and aero-planes, and marking our reluctance to be so near modernism, our Santal friends expressed profound surprise.

The yard is scrupulously clean, and, to translate a Bengali saying, "You might pick vermilion if some dropped upon it." There is sometimes the finish of a cement but generally everything is plastered over with mud and cow-dung. Jutting out into the lane are the pig-styes and poultry-yard. The room at the entrance is the "Gohal" (*cattle-shed*). Almost invariably a stench will repel one's olfactory nerves, but then one must not forget that the Santals like the Hindus almost worship the cows; and the first item in their annual Harvest Home is the "Gohal puja," when the cows are anointed with vermilion and adored as their best earthly possession. There, one will find the oil-press and the rice-husking "dheñki." In the houses of the more affluent, a separate outer house can be found which gives the combined service of a kitchen and poultry-yard. Drinking-water drawn from the neighbouring springs is stored in earthen pitchers, about two cubits and a half in height, and kept in a conspicuous place.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

has been going on for hundred years ever since civilisation dawned on the banks of the lower Ganges, and is yet far from complete, has led to a distinct uplift of the primitive peoples, and has been making highly desirable additions to the culture of the civilised community."

The Santal Character

Any one who comes in contact with the Santal, cannot but be struck with the heavy-built, bronze-bodied men and women. They are extremely hardy and can work incessantly with a smiling face. If the body is thus healthy, the mind is equally so. The truthfulness of the Santal is proverbial; the exceptions are due to his contact with the outside world. Accused in criminal courts the Santal would cut short everything by a clean confession. He is generally a meek fellow; but if he says "no" once, none can turn it into "yes."

Any one who has seen a Santal house, cannot but be struck with their habitual cleanliness. All things are kept neatly arranged. No dust can accumulate in the yards and all refuse and rubbish are neatly stowed away. The Santal is frank and open, honest and gentle. He does not understand the intricacies of life and craft and hypocrisy are not associated with him.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

and night. As a rule they cook their food outside, but always have a fire-place inside. During the cold season they generally cook their food inside, the result being that the house specially at night, is suffocatingly full of smoke and every thing becomes covered with soot. This does not, however, seem to affect the Santals much. In the bed-room they store their rice and all other belongings, and the fowls are kept too in that room at night. It is, of course, not possible to keep such a house clean, even if they tried to do so.

Agriculture :—The Santals before becoming agriculturists were probably in the hunting stage. Still, nothing pleases them so much as to be out for hunting, they even now observe the "Dehiri hunting", which is an annual hunt. During the time of the annual hunt the Dehiri priest performs certain ceremonies to propitiate "Sin Bonga" to avert calamity during hunting. All these suggest that prior to becoming agriculturists the Santals were in the hunting stage. At present the Santals are typical agriculturists. There is no authentic record when the Santal first started tilling the soil. Rev. Bodding in his memoir, "How the Santals live" has mentioned their first attempt at cultivation in the following words :—

"It is just possible that one of their first attempts to get something out of the soil may have been something like what is now called 'kurau', a mode of cultivation that is said to have been used also by Santals in former years, but is not practised by them at the present time, so far as is known. It is, however, still kept up by the Paharias living on the hills of the Santal country. A piece of jungle is cut down high up

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

jaher rather than as the *Manjhi than*. Until recently the shrine had been in another place beyond the present limits of the dwellings, and the villagers had found such a site very inconvenient. They were encouraged to change the site by the fact that in the street there grew an *arjun* tree, one of the sacred trees of Hinduism, and they felt they should do something to signalize its presence in the village. On a cleared space at the base of the tree there were two miniature wooden seats which were used by the spirits when they came, and there were also a clay horse and an elephant which had been in position there since the establishment of the shrine. The duty of tending these shrines, of sweeping the floor and plastering it with cowdung, falls upon an unmarried girl from the headman's house. The headman officiates as the priest at this shrine, presenting the offerings to his ancestors as the representative not only of the family but also of the living members of the village community. Offerings are made during the *Mukor*, the festival that closes the month of *Pus* in mid-January, and also during the Spring and Harvest festival seasons. Animals are sacrificed, but there is a significant difference in the methods of killing the animals offered in the sacred grove to the tribal spirits and those offered to the spirits of the ancestors. In the case of the former the animal is beheaded, but in the latter the animal is struck by a heavy implement on the back of the head so that the blood is not poured out. It does not seem possible to obtain any explanation of this from a Santal, apart from the all-embracing statement that "it is the custom". There is here another indication of the complexity of Santal religion; it would be difficult to fit all the facts into a scheme that seeks to find the origin of sacrifice in a single or simple cause.

The spirit world is not only the concern of the whole community or of each village but also of each family, a fact that finds embodiment in the cult surrounding the third sacred place of the Santals. This is a sacred enclosure inside each dwelling-house known as the *bhitar*, an Indo-Aryan word that means "within". This is formed by constructing a wall across the breadth of the main dwelling-house and so dividing the interior into two rooms with a mud partition between. The *bhitar* is the smaller of the two. The wall may be carried as high as the average height of a man, but often it is only about four feet high. The opening through which members of the family may pass from one room to the other is left vacant without a door. There are no sacred emblems kept in the *bhitar*,

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

and in fact it is used extensively as a storeroom, particularly for stacking the bundles of reserve rice. Any man may pass through this opening, but no woman may do so unless she belongs to the family living there. The daughters of the house are debarred from going into the *bhitar* after they have married. After marriage a woman belongs to her husband's family, and this prohibition is one of several that are enforced with a view to ensuring that she shall not bring calamity on her husband's house by continuing to have dealings with the spirits of her father's home. She has to remove herself from their influence. Within the *bhitar* dwells the house spirit, and it is also visited by the ancestors of the family. There offerings of food and beer are made to the immediate ancestors. In certain instances sub-clan sacrifices are made in this inner room. The names of the spirits to whom the sub-clan sacrifices are made are kept secret. The knowledge of these names is handed down within each family from the father to the eldest son or other heir, and under no circumstances should it be imparted to others. An instance was reported of a man who was in deep distress because his father had died without his having had an opportunity of learning the name of the *abge*, as this spirit is called. He hoped to learn the name from one of his father's brothers, but this person also died before he could pass on the information. Shortly afterwards his dead uncle appeared to him in a dream and revealed the name, and he confirmed the correctness of the information by visiting yet another uncle who knew the secret. This story shows that the rules of silence are not too strictly observed within the family circle. Women are not allowed to learn the name, and in most cases they are excluded from participating in the sacrificial meal. The same prohibition applies to sons-in-law, though one of the Soren sub-clans is allowed to leave a portion of the food from the meal for their sons-in-law. When they summon them to eat, however, they address them as they would the household dogs, which emphasizes their separation from the family and from the sub-clan.

Some features of the Santal cult, as well as an indication of the ways in which it may develop, can be illustrated by a description of the shrine that stands on the outskirts of the village of Sarenga. This village was at first a Santal settlement, but it is now a place of nearly two thousand inhabitants, most of whom are Bengali Hindus. The present-day Santal inhabitants number barely one hundred, but amongst them are some who claim descent from the founders of the village, who lived,

so they say, nine generations ago.